

California Arts Council
Focus Group Meetings Summary
September 22-October 2, 2003
(Nine Meetings)

The following summary lists in priority order the recommendations from the nine focus group meetings sponsored by the California Arts Council. For minutes of individual focus group meetings contact the Juan Carrillo, Chief of Grant Programs.

Funding Priorities

Support Infrastructure Organizations/Groups of the CAC

Infrastructure support (multicultural, discipline-based, county partners, art service organizations) was articulated more than any other recommendation during the nine focus group meetings. The following specifics were discussed:

- Overwhelming support for the State-Local Partnership Program network (SLPP); specifically rural agencies.
- Some recommended the temporary exclusion of the larger budgeted SLPP and/or urban partners until the CAC was in a better financial position.
- Support and encourage all partners to conduct convenings of the arts field, especially the rural partners (refer to section on *Convenings*.)
- Encourage or develop regional infrastructure support especially in the rural areas of the state.

Advocacy and Education

Advocacy/education is critical to the survival of the Arts in California; this was an overarching theme of discussion for all focus groups. The following bulleted points are, in many instances, also covered in other topics further down in the body of this document:

- Lobbyist—the field needs a full-time person educating the Legislature about the impact of the arts. This person needs to be aware of all legislation that is proposed and passed in order to recommend where, and how, the CAC may benefit from specific legislation. (This effort needs to come from the field; it cannot come from the CAC.)
- Launch a campaign to put a voter initiative on the ballot mandating funding for the arts.
- Create an *Arts Pac* and fundraise to support a political effort.
- Train the Arts field in advocacy mobilization techniques.
- Develop an advocacy-training curriculum tool kit for the field.
- Visibility Campaign: Much of the public is unaware of the impact the arts make in society. The Legislature would not have been able to cut the CAC to its current status if the impact the arts make was understood.
 - Develop a strategic effort to increase the visibility of the public value of arts, culture and creativity.
- Regional *educational summits* to get the Arts on the table.
- Develop and nurture strategic partnerships outside of the Arts community.

Public Relations/Visibility/Marketing

It was apparent that this category deserved extra attention due to the current CAC situation, but especially for the future survival of the Arts in California. Though this was discussed as a broader topic that needed to be addressed, it has an overall impact on the CAC's *Arts Marketing Institute* and its future direction.

- Public Education Marketing / Media / Advertising Campaign to address the lack of public awareness regarding the impact of Arts in society, specifically in California. Develop target areas to focus this effort—the at-large public, varying sectors of communities, public officials (local and state) etc. Specific ideas included:
 - Postcards with three pennies attached to emphasize California's spending on the Arts.
 - Develop PSAs and/or video documentation for distribution. The national *Americans for the Arts* campaign was suggested as an example; including, perhaps, the potential for a partnership focusing specifically on California. Engage high profile people to get the attention of the masses. Develop large ad campaigns.
 - Develop a scrapbook of CAC grantees, specifically Artists In Residence (AIR), as a mechanism to educate the different counties. A TV ad that shows an Artist in Residence in a school surrounded by children seriously engaged in creating and completing their assignments and then a fade out leaving a classroom devoid of arts activity. Develop a visual map of every AIR that was in the State to demonstrate what is missing.
 - Create strategies with the entertainment and commercial industries documenting artists' training within the non-profit arena that helps launch careers in the commercial sectors. Show how the CAC has contributed towards their success.
 - Reach out to graduate students to get involved in research, production, marketing, etc.
 - Utilize the *Internet* for marketing and visibility.
 - Tour a cultural performing arts showcase and market for visibility.
- Focus on an *Arts License Plate* marketing campaign.
- Focus on a marketing and visibility campaign for *Arts Day*, *Arts Week*, and *Arts* (and Humanities) *Month*. Develop an interagency agreement with the California Department of Education to promote *Arts Day* to districts and individual schools (similar to *Fireman's Week*, etc.)
- Devise new ways to use the CAC logo for maximum visibility.
- Develop Website Marketing Campaign.

Research

The lack of accessible research was mentioned several times during the focus group meetings. Recommendations included:

- Develop an overall *cultural policy* that includes the other cultural sectors, including the humanities, historic preservation, and library communities. The CAC should take a leadership role to bring the discussion together. (Refer to Pew

Charitable Trust and the Center for Arts and Culture study *Policy Partners: Making the Case for State Investment in Culture* and work by the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.)

- Develop further research that provides legitimacy to the impact of the arts on society.
- Utilize research to impact public policy and the legislature.
- Develop research papers delineating how other state agencies are surviving; or to understand what strategies they are using for survival.
- Sponsor brainstorming sessions—looking at arts and quality of life issues.
- Compile, analyze, and interpret CAC data for public distribution—including AIE programs and other CAC grantees.
- Study, plan, and develop strategies for the next cycle of the state budget.
- Have academic institutions develop public policy on art in public places.
- Develop a survey of CAC funded Artists in Residence to assess the number of children are no longer receiving services.

Fund Organizations Most at Risk

Identify the most vulnerable small and multicultural organizations; also, grassroots organizations that work with kids.

- Provide support, for example grants of \$2000 to \$5000, with the expectation of specific results.
- Provide emergency grant funding—mini-grants of \$500 to \$1000. Non-traditional funding for small groups/organizations.
- Focus on organizations that have the broadest reach, providing support for organizational capacity.
- Offer grants based on need to support core activities.
- Develop ways to encourage the sharing of resources for survival—a mutual dependence/support approach.

Training Programs

Provide the arts field with training that better equips them for the present and the future.

- Develop training programs for artists and arts organizations—fundamentals of arts management and survival skills. Provide mechanism for follow-up technical assistance.
- Develop educational training programs for young aspiring politicians.
- Develop advocacy training for arts professionals and community members.

Strategic Partnerships

Develop partnerships and interagency relationships outside of the Arts that are essential to the field's survival, including but not limited to:

- Tourism
- Economic Development
- Trade and Commerce
- American Association of Retired People (AARP)
- League of California Cities and California State Association of Counties

- Housing and Redevelopment
- Health
- Social Welfare
- Service Industry; as well as,
- Relationships between the commercial and nonprofit arts sectors to expand the commercial industry's understanding that their client base includes artists, nonprofit arts groups and organizations; i.e. film industry and musical instrument manufacturers.

Arts Showcase

Develop a performing arts showcase representative of the state's cultural diversity to travel regionally or statewide.

- Utilize *Arts Marketing Institute* as the vehicle to promote and attract high visibility.

Convenings

Facilitate convenings throughout the state for furthering the arts agenda.

- Organize regional meetings to:
 - Avoid losing a sense of artists communities
 - Communications by and between groups within a regional field.
 - Provide training.
 - Facilitate dialogue with partners (not just arts partners)
- Provide travel support for artists and small groups to attend conferences and convenings.

Speakers Bureau

Develop and train individuals for a *Speaker's Bureau*; organize and/or schedule opportunities to address local groups.

Other Ideas

- Send an *Open Invitation* to the field to submit a bid for (limited) funding; assess which projects have the broadest reach or are the most unique in approach; provide support based on available funds.
- Support the Local Arts Education Partnership Program.
- Provide grant funding for Artists in Residence (in selected parts of the state) to support social justice projects; document and promote the results.
- Develop fellowships for journalists to learn and write more critically, and more frequently, about the Arts.
- Distribute a *Certificate of Recognition* to artists and arts organizations/groups previously funded by the CAC; to assist in securing funding and support in this uncertain economic period.

- Coordinate a *Day Without Art*. Cover up—shroud—art in the State Capitol and in public museums; to do so on *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) was suggested.
- Develop an *Affinity Arts Credit Card* as an alternative source of revenue for the arts in the state.
- Explore support from the Foundation community.
- Develop a thematic concept for grant funding throughout the state; based on, for example, the California Council on the Humanities' *Grapes of Wrath Project*.